

NEXT MEETING, FEBRUARY 2

**WHY EVERYONE
IS TALKING
ABOUT
VOIP**



INSIDE:

DIGITAL CARTOGRAPHY
VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL
NERO 9: SOME BURNING QUESTIONS
OPERA MINI AND PALM TX
EDITING WITH HOT KEYS
MOVING TO A NEW MAC
PLUS, MORE SIG NEWS, COMMENTARY,
AND ANSWERS TO YOUR COMPUTING
QUESTIONS

President's File



We've been talking about changing Web services and building a DACS online community for quite some time. It now appears we are on target for accomplishing that by the end of February. The host

area is all prepped and configured as of this writing. The frameworks have all been tested. The data import of the existing forum went well. Just some final cleaning up to do—crossing I's and dotting T's.

It'll be moving into warmer weather soon. If you've been looking at digital cameras or new image editing software, stay tuned. Gary Spring will be returning from Ritz Camera in May as the feature presenter. We're also working out details for a return of Lesa King for photo editing tips. By the way, her new book, 'Photoshop CS4: The Missing Manual' is now available!

Officer elections are coming up in March. We still need members to step forward. DACS has five major functions for members: Meetings/presentations, Website, newsletter, group finances, membership benefits, leadership, and promotions. We will be electing President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer. These roles are required for DACS to operate. Contact the board at dacsboard@dacs.org to find out be added to the election roster and/or to add your skills to the group leadership.

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Before I sign off, the "Tech Projects" SIG is on hiatus until April 2009. Due to unexpected circumstances, the January Windows SIG was cancelled so we will carry the topic of 'Moving data to a new computer' to the February Windows SIG. See you at the next meeting!

—Rob Limbaugh
reimbaugh@dacs.org

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (required by 39 U.S.C. sec. 3685)

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Members who wish to receive DACS email messages who have not received an email notice for the General Meeting should send a request to be put on the DACS email list to: treasurer@dacs.org.

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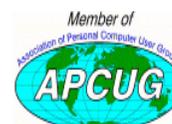
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Applications & Hardware to enhance *dacs.doc* are welcome.



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HelpLine

Volunteers have offered to field member questions by phone. Please limit calls to the hours indicated below. Days means 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; evening means 6 to 9:30 p.m. Please be considerate of the volunteer you are calling. HelpLine is a free service. If you are asked to pay for help or are solicited for sales, please contact the dacs.doc editor; the person requesting payment will be deleted from the listing. Can we add your name to the volunteer listing?

d = day e = evening

Program	Name	Phone #	
APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
ASP.Net	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
C#, VB	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
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Interface-Instrumentation	Andrew Woodruff	(203) 798-2000	(d e)
PhotoShop/Dreamweaver	Annette van Ommeren	(914) 232-0149	(e)
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SQL	Lewis Westfall	(203) 790-0229	(e)
SQL Server, MySQL-5	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
Malware	Jeff Setaro	(203) 748-6748	(d)
VB.Net, Visual Basic	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)

Directors' Notes

A regular meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, January 12, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. Present were Charles Bovaird, Richard Corzo, Sean Henderson, Rob Limbaugh, and Joseph Tobin. President Rob Limbaugh presided. Minutes of the last meeting held December 8, 2008 were presented and, in the absence of a quorum, were approved by email after the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$6,418.91, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$6,350.86 plus postage on hand of \$68.05. Subtracting a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$1,235.00 left a net equity of \$5,183.91. He also reported that the current membership is at 221, of which 197 have valid email addresses and 106 are electronic memberships.

Newsletter

The topic was discussed but deferred for an email update and further review.

Resource Center Insurance

We pay \$901 for the current policy. We are requesting quotes for \$5,000 and \$10,000 insurance coverage.

Alarm System

We discussed the current system. We need to review its settings, who gets notified, alerts and the possibility of in-house security.

Projector replacement bulb.

The projector bulb should be available the week of January 19.

General meeting topics

General meeting topics in 2009 are updated as follows: February is IP Telephony, March is "Home Server", April is Linux, May is Digital Cameras, and June will highlight "Law Enforcement Tracking". For July, a topic appealing to a general audience would be appropriate, while a 'back to school' topic would be perfect for August.

—Patrick Libert

Meeting Preview

IP Telephony—Vantage Communications

by Richard Corzo

OUR FEBRUARY 2009 meeting will cover the subject of IP telephony. You have probably heard the term VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), a means of converting voice calls to digital audio for transmission over the Internet. Your cable company likely offers this service in addition to cable television and cable Internet. An IP telephony service for a business can go even further.

Robert Andresen, VP of Sales at Vantage Communications (<http://www.vantageip.com>) will be our guest speaker. Vantage offers their Vantage IP Telephony Service (VIP) for small and medium sized businesses, branch offices and schools. Their solution integrates voice, data and video for benefits such as:

- telecommuting and disaster recovery
- saving employees' time
- a single number



- improved customer satisfaction
- controlling expenses

To reach employees effectively, calls can be forwarded to multiple end points (home, cell phone, or Blackberry device), allowing the use of a single number to reach someone. Networked based voicemail enables voice mails to be sent as e-mail attachments. Voice mails are accessible not only from phone devices, but also from the desktop using the VIP Service's Microsoft Outlook integration.

Customer service can be improved with the increased ability to reach mobile workers. Secure instant messaging is also offered. Protection is provided from interruption due to power failures or weather-related disruptions.

Costs can be controlled with a predictable monthly billing plan. Web-

based administration and self-service, and single data cable runs can also reduce cost.

Vantage Communications is a partner with Cisco Systems, and can leverage their network and IP telephone equipment.

Join us at our February meeting to learn more about IP telephony and the VIP Service from Vantage Communications.

DACS meetings are held at the Danbury Hospital auditorium. Activities begin at 6:30 p.m. with registration and casual networking. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. with a question and answer period (Ask DACS), followed by announcements and a short break. The main evening presentation begins approximately 8:00 p.m. The meeting is scheduled to adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

DACS General Meetings are free and open to the public. Members and prior attendees are encouraged to extend invitations to anyone interested in this topic.

Danbury Area Computer Society (DACS) is a registered nonprofit and has been serving the region since 1990. Members receive an award-winning newsletter, members-only workshops and events, and access to volunteer phone support.

Meeting Review

Digital Cartography

By Rob Limbaugh

OUR DIGITAL Cartography presentation kicked off with an icebreaker activity that Ed Hicks shared with us. Groups of 12 were given map sections and told that they needed to locate the persons with adjacent map pieces and find out some details about the individual. Afterwards, the maps were assembled.

Ed took us through the history of map making and the concepts behind it. Markers and maps going back many thousands of years have been found. The earliest maps were certainly not portable, as they were often large stone engravings. As tools and skills progressed, so did cartography. Paper, of course, made maps portable. One of the more recent ingenious designs was a wrist band that held multiple scrolls.



There are many different types of maps. Different maps are made with different technologies. For example, infrared imagery can enhance features, such as foliage, to bring out better detail. Other maps, such as those used for the sport of 'orienteering' may be made from scratch using a starting point and manual mapping techniques, or may be overlaid on an existing map to enhance the details with things such as stone walls, fences, sheds, and other items not commonly found on road maps or even Google Earth.

Orienteering is a sport in which participants use a highly detailed map and compass to find various positions and points of interest on or in the landscape. There is usually a 'start', control sites, and a 'finish'. Orienteers use a punch card to mark the places they have been.

When merging existing map data with another map or new data, it is important to know what type of coordinate system, or datums, each map uses. Coordinates that may appear to be similar might have many feet of discrepancy when compared to each other due to differences in the datums. If merging multiple maps, the coordinates must be converted into a common format. WGS 84 (World Geodetic System Revision 84) is the most common datum and is used in GPS equipment.

OCAD (<http://www.ocad.com>) is an application used to create new and composite maps. It uses vector drawings so a map can be printed in various scales—even several feet across—without losing detail or pixelizing. Ed showed us how an existing map could be accented with features such as a trail, a building, or other details that may not be present on the source map. OCAD is capable of making maps for use with outside terrain or even those found on mall directories showing stores, exits, and bathrooms.

For more information about Digital Cartography, check out Ed Hick's website at <http://www.orienteeringunlimited.com>.

Significant Bits February 2009

by Sean N. Henderson

On Software Installations

I RECEIVED AS A Christmas gift Ahead's Nero 9—a CD/DVD burning suite with some authoring and backup tools as well. I have a combination of software pieces already on my laptop that in some way do some or all of what Nero 9 claims it can do. However, the promise of having all these tasks integrated into a single package seemed appealing, so I decided I'd give it try. I had also recently reinstalled my copy of Nero 6 on my downstairs PC and was pleasantly reminded how much better I liked Nero 6's interface, so this was another push to try Nero 9.

The Nero 9 installation took 45 minutes on my laptop. One colleague mentioned that maybe I should have tried the install with my antivirus software turned off to speed up the process. Except for operating systems, I'm curious why a software package would take 45 minutes to install in this day-and-age of high-speed processors and drives.

Nero 9 is much more involved than Nero 6 and similar versions, where Nero 9 includes media players, some authoring tools, and looks like it will replace the need for other software items. In my case, my laptop had separate programs already for viewing DVDs and authoring DVDs/VCDs.

Remember when installing any software, and especially anything that's a "suite" to make a restore point first and backup your system. I'd also recommend if the install left some installation related files, to keep those around, since some software titles need the leftover installation files to uninstall themselves.

First impressions of Nero 9 are that it will extensively "hook" into the Desktop environment, changing file extension associations, and adding context-menu options. For myself, I'm more fond of applications that do not touch the registry and or are "portable" in nature, so Nero 9 has already a bad score in my book before I've even done anything with it yet. While the installer gives options for which components and templates to install, there is no expert mode to prevent Nero 9 from messing with

the file extensions. Also, Nero 9 claims some file extensions that are common or else used by another application.

Opera Mini and Palm TX Part II

You'll recall I had mentioned previously about using Opera Mini on my Palm TX. After a month or so of usage, I'm finding that it works okay most of the time, but it is not really optimized for different networks. In one instance I had to delete all the scanned entries for other Wi-Fi hotspots so that it would stop trying to logon to my distant and not present work network. So currently, I only use Opera Mini on my TX for home use, and the Blazer otherwise. Be forewarned, having installed the particular Java layer and Opera Mini, my Palm TX has tended to crash more when using Opera Mini or Blazer.

Editing Just About Anything

Something I find somewhat irritating when trying to help another computer user with a problem or task is when the person really has not taken the time to learn their software or operating system from a navigational perspective. I can tell they do not know the software well if they do not use the keyboard and/or keyboard shortcuts. (These keyboard shortcuts are also referred to as "hot keys" or "key combinations", and so on.) This is where the person helping, such as myself, says, "Please get out of your chair and let me drive." If you use a computer and do not know your hot keys, read on.

The mouse and graphic desktop are great at giving people quick access to files and a shorter learning curve for applications. However, if someone's primary way to interact with a computer is by way of the mouse, then they may likely take longer to do a task, especially spreadsheet work. The reality is that people are capable of typing (keyboarding?) faster than they can point-and-click (or speak), menu diving or clicking around the screen at teeny-tiny hieroglyphs that may-or-may-not be a link.

A quick way to learn all the key combinations for your desktop and applications is to go cold-turkey and simply to take the mouse off of the computer, have a list of shortcuts and go from there. Here are some hot keys in Windows XP that are pretty common to help get you going. (Check your manuals and or online for your particular desktop, application and operating system if different.)

Ctl-Esc	Start Menu
Alt+F4	Close window, application, or Windows itself
F6	Select or highlight whatever is in the location field, if present (browsers, directories)
F1	Show help
Ctr-F1	Hide help
F2	Rename a file (Windows and many applications using the standard open file dialog)
Ctl-c	Copy selected area into the 'Clipboard' aka the buffer
Ctl-v	Paste from the Clipboard (buffer)
Ctl-z	Undo last action

One of the reasons I think laptop manufacturers get away with their unique (and thus horrid) keyboard layouts is that most people never take the time to learn how to use the control key in combination with the page keys, arrow keys, and home keys. If people used the navigational keys and hot keys more, I'm guessing the random placement of these keys on laptops would not occur. (Pet peeve: Control keys not being the outermost key on the spacebar row.)

The other thing to consider is that the availability of hot keys are what make local applications so much easier to use than Web applications. Below are some links that list more Windows XP keyboard shortcuts.

SEAN N. HENDERSON is regular contributor to DACS.doc. More information at <http://seannhenderson.net/dacs.html>.

LINKS

Keyboard Shortcuts for XP

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/301583>

Excel 2003 Keyboard Shortcuts

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel/HP052037811033.aspx>

Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: February 2009

ASP.Net. Focuses on Web site/server application development using Microsoft Visual Studio, C#, VB, Javascript and SQL Server programming tools. Starts with Random Access, followed by a programming discussion with examples.

Contact: Chuck Fizer cfizer@snet.net.

Meets 1st Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: February 4

Digital Imaging. Digital cameras, retouching and printing.

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 graffic@bigfoot.com.

Meets last Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: No program for February

Jobs. Networking and jobs search

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 aam@mags.net.

Meets by e-mail.

Next meeting: TBA

Linux. Provides Help in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

Contact: Drew Kwashnak 203-910-6477 (Cell)

Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: February 18

Macintosh. Focuses on all aspects of the Mac operating system.

Contact: Richard Corzo macsig@dacs.org.

Meets 1st Thursday at DACS Resource Center at 7 p.m.

Next Meeting: February 5

Open Source Web Programming. Focuses on open source tools for Windows and Linux.

Contact: John Lansdale, 914-533-2002.

Meets 3rd Monday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: February 16

PC Maintenance. Review of PC hardware and OpSys maintenance and use.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 aam@mags.net.

Meets irregularly, at the DACS Resource Center, announced by e-mail.

Server. Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook.

Contact: Jim Scheef jscheef@telemarksys.com

Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next meeting: February 12

Tech Projects. This SIG Will work on DACS "Online Community projects as well as other areas from practical application solutions, to brainstorming and to tweeking Commercial products. All skill levels and backgrounds are welcome. The goal is to mix, match and customize technology to fit our needs.

Meets 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS resource center.

Contact: Rob Limbaugh at (203)648-9176, relimbaugh@dacs.org

Next meeting: Cancelled

VB.Net, Visual Basic-6. Focuses on Smart Client Windows application development using Visual Studio, VB, C# and SQL Server programming tools. Starts with a random access session , followed by Object Oriented discussions and programming with examples.

Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 cfizer@snet.net or Greg Austin, 845 494-5095 greg.austin@ryebrookpba.org.

Meets 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, preceded 1 hour with a shared cost pizza snack.

Next Meeting: February 4

Virtual Computing. This SIG will explore virtual computing technologies and how to leverage them as additional system resources. Our main focus will be on the free VMWare products, but we will also look at other technologies and tools.

Meets 4th Tuesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center

Contact: Rob Limbaugh relimbaugh@dacs.org, 203 648-9176

Next Meeting: February 24

Web Design. Applications for designing and creating Web sites.

Contact: Annette van Ommeren avanommeren@dacs.org.

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: February 17

Windows. This SIG will discuss ways to get the most out of your system and applications, how to do new things, and other options in terms of hardware and software to help make life easier. All skill levels are welcomed and encouraged to attend

Contact: Rob Limbaugh relimbaugh@dacs.org, (203)648-9176

Next Meeting: February 19

SIG News & Events

DotNet & C#VB. Despite the intervention of inclement weather forcing us to cancel our dotNET SIG meeting last week, we can bring into focus some exciting developments to report. We constructed a clever innovation for that CAPTCHA function in the DACS Web site. This CAPTCHA function will now be invoked as a control. A signal advantage is that no Web page chock full of data in a view state need be transferred here or there or anywhere.

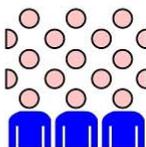
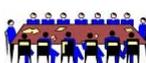
This control allows user identify to be established as a person, not an automaton, for access to the site. Thus spam will be blocked efficiently and expeditiously for better network management. Details of program code for this innovation will be outlined in later meetings of the SIG

After a tasty snack of pizza, we enjoyed a lucid demo of the inheritance capability in C#, followed by a discussion of generics that type content of a collection.

In C#, inheritance allows a base class to be defined in a namespace so a subordinate derived class can draw upon properties in the base class. As we saw in the demo, a person can have properties that can be used to illuminate a contact person as a class derived to allow use of these properties without recapitulating them. First name and last name are examples of such properties. A derived class can draw properties from at most one base class in C#. As a formal language, C# enforces precise rules on what can be said in a programming strategy.

February 2009

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2  7:00 P.M. GENERAL MTG	3	4  4 PM ASP.Net 7 PM C# VB.Net Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996	5  Macintosh 7:00 PM Richard Corzo macsig@dacs.org	6	7
8	9  7:00 PM Board of Directors	10	11	12  7:00 PM Server Jim Scheef 860 355-0034	13	14 
15	16  Open-source Web Program. 7:00 PM John Lansdale 914-533-2002	17  Web Design Annette van Ommeren 914 232-0149	18  7:30 PM Linux Drew Kwashnak 203 910-6477	19  7:00 PM Windows Rob Limbaugh 203 826-8196	20	21  DACS.DOC Deadline
22 	23	24  Virtual Computing Rob Limbaugh 203 826-8196	25	26	27	28

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Moving to a New Mac

by Richard Corzo

AFTER WORK ONE evening, I tried hopping on to my iMac G5. It was unresponsive, and several attempts to reboot it got it to various stages. Sometimes no further than the familiar Mac boot chime to a black screen, sometimes all the way to a full desktop before the machine froze. It was past the three-year AppleCare period, and I'd long since grown tired of the fan noise it had developed over time. I had figured on keeping the iMac until next fall, by which time I expected Snow Leopard to be out. But, this behavior seemed to press the issue and accelerate my intended schedule. The Apple Store was just a few minutes away, and I'd already thought about what I wanted for my next Mac.

I couldn't resist the temptation for immediate gratification, so I headed over to the Apple Store. Although I didn't really need mobility within my own household, I thought it would be convenient if I could have a laptop this time that I could take with me to the Macintosh SIG. I'd read about the sleek and solid aluminum unibody construction of the new MacBooks and MacBook Pros. The one thing that was holding me back a little was the smaller hard drive size of the laptop compared to my iMac. The 320 GB of the higher model 15.4" MacBook Pro is probably generous for most people, but I had ordered my iMac with a 400 GB drive, and used more than 300 GB in the Leopard partition. After a few questions and some hands-on time, I decided to go ahead with the MacBook Pro and brought it home.

The Apple Specialist had mentioned that when I first booted up, the Setup Assistant would offer me the option of transferring data and settings from a Time Machine backup. Fortunately, I had one on an external drive, since my iMac wouldn't stay up long enough to expect a reliable direct transfer through the network or FireWire. I plugged in the external drive and the Setup Assistant recognized the available Time Machine backups. It took about 2 hours and I had just 8 GB left of

my 320 GB. I had chosen to transfer the machine settings as well as the data and settings from my two home folders. (I find it useful to have an additional "admin" user in addition to my own normal logon.)

The next evening I started to settle in to the new machine. One of the first things I tried was starting iPhoto. It asked me if I wanted to automatically start iPhoto the next time I plugged in my digital camera. I said Yes, and continued on to verify that my photos were all showing up. The next time I started iPhoto I got the same question, and it started to become apparent that something was amiss. Talking to our Mac guy at work the next day gave me the idea that I needed to check the permissions on the Preferences folder, which is located inside the Library folder of my home folder.

Indeed, that folder showed a small no access symbol superimposed over the folder icon, as did several other folders within my home folder Library. Doing a Get Info on the folder revealed that there was No Access to Everyone, which explained why preferences were not sticking. In the Get Info window I changed permissions to give myself read/write permission on the folders in question, and requested that the permission change be applied to any enclosed items. If I haven't lost you yet, I'll mention one more thing that may have been a factor in the wrong permissions. On my iMac I had recently changed the numeric user ID to 501, which is the default for the first account created, so I could access my own home folder when booted from the Mac installation on my external drive. If you understand UNIX, this might make some sense to you. Otherwise just ignore the last few sentences and enjoy the rest of the article.

That seemed to do the trick. iPhoto now remembered my answer, and I was on to iTunes to verify that my music was all there. Things seemed to go well until I started setting up MobileMe syncing on my new machine, going into the Sync tab of MobileMe preferences to initiate my first sync. It seemed to start but then stopped immediately with the status still saying Never Synchronized. Checking the Console available in the

Application:Utilities folder, I found no messages between the sync start and stop that would give me a hint as to what was wrong. I expected to have to visit a Mac Genius at the Apple store, but a conversation with the Mac guy at work made me realize that I was going to have to start with a fresh account and home folder. I canceled my Genius appointment.

When I got home I backed up my home folder to my external drive. (If you don't already have one, have I convinced you yet that you need an external drive for your Mac or PC?) Then logging into my other admin account I deleted my main account and home folder, and recreated a fresh account. I brought back my data one major folder at a time, Music, Pictures, Movies, etc. I did not however copy back my Library folder, except for the Mail and Mail Downloads folders. Folders inside the Library, such as Preferences and Application Support are presumably what were causing my sync problems. So I didn't want to bring back the bad karma. This means that preferences will have to be reestablished for all your applications, although you could try copying back some individual preference files on a case-by-case basis. My new home folder was a success, because I could now sync with MobileMe. This allowed me to bring down my Mail account definitions, and then successfully start Mail.

I'd like to make a small plug here for the Mac OS design over Windows. The Windows equivalent to the individual Mac preference files is the monolithic Windows registry. If you've ever had to pick through the registry to try to eliminate traces of a failed application on Windows, you'll appreciate the ability to just delete a Mac preference file without fearing that you'll mess up some other application or part of the OS.

One issue that you may run into by starting with a clean home folder is that licensed software may require you to re-enter the license key. If you installed from physical media, you'll need to go find the sleeve it came in. Much of my software was downloaded and a key was sent in an e-mail. I have a mail folder called Software Licenses to keep those important e-mails. I recommend that you use an IMAP e-mail account such as that which MobileMe offers. IMAP accounts keep mail on a server, so it doesn't matter if your hard drive crashes. You'll still have a copy of that e-mail. If you don't want to pay for MobileMe, then of course go for a free IMAP account such as AOL or AIM Mail (<http://mail.aim.com>), or second best, a Web mail account.



One other thing I wanted to mention is that I migrated from a PowerPC-based Mac to an Intel Mac, and one might wonder if any issues might arise. Many of my applications were already Universal, meaning they were compiled to run on either PowerPC or Intel architecture. On the other hand two PowerPC-only applications got two different results. Happily my Macromedia Dreamweaver (before they were bought by Adobe) runs without a hitch. Yet Adobe Reader 8, a PowerPC application from my old machine, gets an error message: You can't open the application because it is not supported on this architecture. I'm sure downloading the Intel Mac version of this will easily resolve this.

I'm still working through some issues with Spotlight and getting my first complete Time Machine backup, but so far I really like this new MacBook Pro. It's a beautiful machine. I may have an advantage over those used to a trackpad with a separate button, but this being my first Mac laptop, I'm having little trouble getting used to the trackpad.

New Members

- 1) Erin Mallon
- 2) Ahmad Asgharian
- 3) Nicholas Dunec

This is Your Last Newsletter

If the membership date on your mailing label reads

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or earlier**

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FREE CLASSIFIEDS

DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in *dacs.doc* at no charge. Ads may be sent by e-mail to Charlie Bovaird at aam@mags.net, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting.

Commentary

Circuit Writer Version 6.6

by Jim Scheef

DRM in disguise?

YOU REMEMBER RICHARD Stallman, right? He's the founder of the Free Software Foundation (fsf.org), creator of the GNU operating system (gnu.org), and has been called "the last true hacker" for at least 20 years (see separate sidebar in this issue).

His take on cloud computing could not differ more from John Patrick. Stallman would tell you that you give up your freedom when you give your data to a remote site rather than keeping it on your machine with free software. There are many, many blogs discussing the comments Stallman made in an interview and I referenced one of them last month – InformationWeek, November 19, 2008 (tinyurl.com/6zttzc) to save you from digging).

Here is a quote
from the interview:

"One reason you should not use Web applications to do your computing is that you lose control," he said. "It's just as bad as using a proprietary program. Do your own computing on your own computer with your copy of a freedom-respecting program? If you use a proprietary program or somebody else's Web server, you're defenseless (sic). You're putty in the hands of whoever developed that software."

Another name for cloud computing is "software as a service". SaaS has been a hot ticket for the last few years for all sorts of enterprise level applications. Some say that cloud computing is just a new name for buying your software and having it hosted remotely. One of my sons just completed a successful SAP implementation for his company. With people using the system at distribution depots all over the country, it made more sense to have the system hosted than to invest in all the data center infrastructure needed to provide enough bandwidth for adequate response times – not to mention the people needed to manage that equipment. In this case, cloud computing is just business reality. By the way, their hosting service is in New Jersey.

When we look at the cloud services that we mere mortals might want to use like Zoho Applications (zoho.com) or Google Apps, some are free as in free beer but none are free as in free speech. When you sign up for such a service, no matter what the service agreement might say about your privacy, your data is at the mercy of that site and its security. And, unlike open source software, you cannot modify the software used by the service to make it suit your needs. The service agreement may even prohibit you from reverse engineering the software and the DMCA could make doing so a crime. Do you begin to see his point? On one hand we have John Patrick telling us to embrace the cloud to free ourselves from worries about backup and data loss with easy access from wherever we might be; and on the other hand we have Richard Stallman. As always, the truth is likely to be found somewhere in the middle. We will explore this more next time.

In the meantime, where did cloud computing begin? How is cloud computing different from timesharing on a minicomputer or mainframe? Was CompuServe and similar services the original consumer cloud? You can comment on my blog at circuitwriter.spaces.live.com.

The CAN-SPAM Act as a warning

One of my favorite columnists is Scott Bradner who writes in Network World. His column in the January 12 issue (tinyurl.com/aytbvu) is especially noteworthy. As news coverage of the inauguration reaches a crescendo, all the business press can talk about is all the new regulation expected from the new Congress. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that regulation is needed in several areas. However, as Scott points out, the legislation intended to regulate spam isn't. He points out that the act was written by the spam industry and thus legitimized spam as a business model. Lesson number one, regulatory legislation must be written by and enforced by someone who wants it to be effective. In the case of the

Internet, no regulation is often the better policy as the various attempts at suppressing porn have shown. However our recent experience with the financial industry as proven that no regulation is just not a viable option.

Is your DSL router vulnerable?

Read this article (<http://tinyurl.com/8faqxt>) on Dark Reading to see if your DSL router might be vulnerable to attack. The affected routers are commonly used on AT&T DSL service. A quick web search shows a simple DSL gateway device, not the common "2-Wire" device. Apparently the Motorola/Netopia 2210 device does not require authentication to change configuration. Imagine that.

The Julie Amero ordeal is finally over.

Back in November, in a nearly total absence of press coverage, Julie Amero pled guilty to a misdemeanor, paid a \$100 fine and lost her teaching credentials. In my opinion, she should have been totally exonerated and reimbursed by the state. You can read a good synopsis of the case at reasononline (tinyurl.com/6gq3yr) and julieamer.blogspot.com.

Events to remember?

An upcoming "I remember" moment may be the transition to digital television broadcasting. Any bets?

There is no doubt that the current financial crisis and the ensuing recession will be remembered for some time to come. So what are people doing about it? eWeek reports (tinyurl.com/7g8b6w) that IBM CEO Sam Palmisano told the Obama transition team that government investment could lead to the creation of more than 900,000 jobs in areas such as broadband access, health care IT and upgrading the electrical grid. Wouldn't that be rewarding? In addition, Palmisano suggested that the government convert existing data centers to green ones. Gosh, I wonder where he got that idea.

An event everyone will remember because it was so good

The inauguration of Barack Obama as our forty-fourth President is still two days away as I write this. He will have been our President for about ten days when the February issue of DACS.doc reaches your mailbox. Sixty or seventy years from now I expect that my granddaughters will say to their grandchildren, "Yes, I remember our first black

President. It was a big deal back then, but now we take that for granted." Hopefully, everyone will also remember our

new President for quickly turning around the financial crisis he inherits.

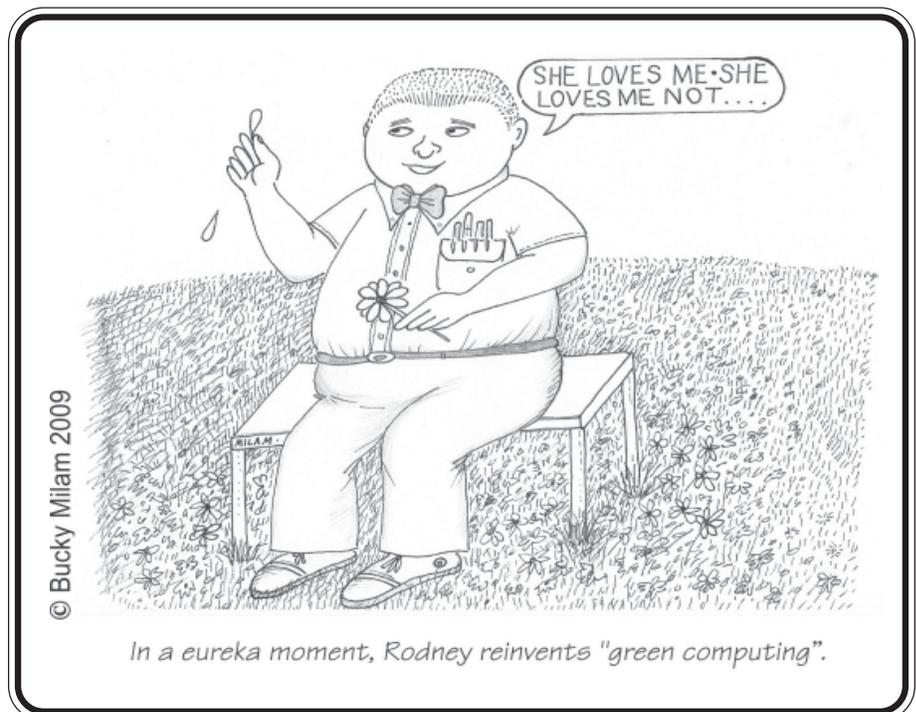
JIM SCHEEF is past president of DACS

Richard who?

In 1994, Steven Levy published an epilog to his seminal book, *Hackers, Heroes of the Computer Revolution* (originally published in 1984), entitled "The Last of the True Hackers." It is the story of Richard Stallman that was missing from the original book. Stallman gave himself the title of Last True Hacker before he left the Artificial Intelligence Lab at MIT in 1984. I suggest you read the epilog or the section on the MIT hacker culture in the Wikipedia article on Stallman. There is a "serious biography" on his website (stallman.org).

Linus Torvalds gets the credit for Linux. Yes, he wrote the original kernel because there was no free version of UNIX for his new 386. (BSD had yet to be cleansed of the last of the AT&T code.) The kernel was a marvelous achievement but it was not of much use without all the system utilities that provide the traditional user interface to UNIX. As it would happen, Richard Stallman's GNU project had those utilities ready to go. The combination is the GNU/Linux operating system (the proper name) that led to the version we use today. Stallman's role in Linux is not limited to those programs.

Much more important is the GPL or general public license created by Stallman to "copyleft" his EMACS text editor. The GPL says that the user of software so licensed is free to use the software however he or she wishes. The software must be provided with its source code to make this freedom possible. Further, any modifications or improvements to the software must remain under the GPL. Rather than try to commercialize Linux, Torvalds decided to release it under the GPL. The irony is that by giving it away, Torvalds ensured that Linux would become a success. Since it was both free and useful, many people tried it. As these people used Linux, they fixed bugs and added features that they needed. The source code for these improvements are also automatically covered by the GPL. As a result, they were then incorporated back into Linux and as it improves, more people try it, and on and on to where we are today. This sharing loop is a key component of Richard Stallman's hacker ethic.



Ask DACS

January 2009

by Jim Scheef

WE WELCOME QUESTIONS FROM the floor at the start of our General Meetings. In addition, members who are not able to attend the General meeting may submit questions to askdacs@dacs.org. We will ask the question for you and post the reply in *DACS.ORG*. Please provide as much information as possible since we can't probe during the session.

There were no questions by email this month.

Q: I use Firefox 2 and am unable to change the page that displays when I first open Firefox. How can I make the change stick? No matter what I do, the home page reverts when I reboot the system.

A: Several possibilities all boiled down to making the desired page the home page. The reboot behavior may be explained in that Firefox thinks that it did not close properly and the profile is not updated properly. My suggestion is to uninstall Firefox 2, delete the old profile(s) in `\Documents and Settings\\Application Data\Mozilla\Firefox` and install Firefox 3. This will create a completely new, clean profile when you first run the new installation.

Q: I want to buy a new laptop and can't decide whether to get the 32-bit version or 64-bit version of Windows Vista. I want to use the machine for video and graphics editing, as well as regular Windows applications. What should I do?

A: There was just too much good information to summarize here but here are some factors relating to the question to consider when selecting a new computer of any type:

Modern processors from both Intel and AMD can run both 32-bit and 64-bit operating systems, both Windows (XP and Vista) and Linux provided that needed device drivers are available. Check with the system or motherboard manufacturer for what OSes are supported.

64-bit Windows will run most **current** software. Many graphics and video applications come in version for both "bitness". Compatibility for older applications degrades with each new version of Windows. Your mileage may vary.

Device drivers for older hardware may not be available for

Vista of any kind and 64-bit drivers will be available for only the newest hardware. Again, check with the manufacturer of any peripherals, video cards, network adapters you intend to use or check the Microsoft official Hardware Compatibility List to see if your device is supported for the version of Windows you want to use. It is harder to determine if Linux will support a device because often the Linux device driver will reference a chip rather than a network card manufacturer.

The big advantage to 64-bit Windows or Linux is the support for more than 4GB of RAM (an unimaginable quantity when the 386 was first introduced). Check with the computer or motherboard manufacturer to see how much and what kind of RAM is supported. Laptops usually have only two SO-DIMM slots so upgrading RAM often means removing the stick that came with the machine. Many laptops have only one RAM slot. These details are often difficult to find in pre-sales literature. Presently 4G SO-DIMM sticks are rather pricey.

Applications that work very close to the OS kernel, like anti-virus software, must be the same bitness as the operating system.

Q: Is there a way to open and edit an Excel spreadsheet on an Apple iPod Touch (or iPhone)?

A: From the audience: "Not yet". Viewers may be available.

Q: I would like to use a digital picture frame as a second monitor to my computer. Is there a way to do that? The picture frame has a USB port.

A: At first I misunderstood the question. Audience members said that if the picture frame supports acting as a USB monitor, then this is possible after installing the appropriate device driver in Vista. No one mentioned other operating systems so

this may be a Vista feature. An audience member suggested there is something called "Picture Frame Sideshow" that may help do what you want.

Q: The built-in wireless in my Dell laptop has failed completely. I would like to replace it with a card with a Broadcom chip rather than one like the original with an Intel chip. Is there any reason this would not work?

A: These cards are normally mini-PCI cards, a standard for smaller cards than what go in a desktop or server machine. The consensus was that, provided there is an appropriate device driver for the Intel-based card, it will work. The antenna connection must also be compatible. These are normally a UHF coaxial (I said 2-wire at the meeting) plug with 'MC' in the name. These connectors often look the same but have minor differences (MCX, MMCX, RP MCX, etc.), so this is something to check.

Q: How can I copy the contacts in my email program to a DVD without the notes I have entered in the notes field?

A: Export the contacts to a CSV (comma separated values) file, import that into Excel, delete any undesired information (that can be entire columns, if you wish), and export the result from Excel into whatever format you want on the DVD.

Q: I am buying a new computer. What is the best way to move my current applications and settings from my old machine to the new one?

A: One member suggested PCmover from Laplink Software, Inc. as a product that will do the whole job – applications, settings and data. The process can take many hours but is more often successful than not. There is also a feature in Vista that will move data files only.

Questions for the upcoming meeting can be emailed to askdacs@dacs.org.

Disclaimer: Ask DACS questions come from members by email or from the audience attending the general meeting. Answers are suggestions offered by meeting attendees and represent a consensus of those responding. DACS offers no warranty as to the correctness of the answers and anyone following these suggestions or answers does so at their own risk. In other words, we could be totally wrong!

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Future Events:

February 2

Paul Troisi, Vantage
Communications – IP
Telephony

March 2

Jay Ferron, APCUG –
Home Server

April 6

Drew Kwashnak –
The Latest on Linux

May 4

Gary Spring, Ritz Camera –
Digital cameras